NATION

RG Kar rape-murder: CBI to seek death for convict

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

$100B investment, 1M jobs from trade deal with Europe

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Shelton reaches first Melbourne semi-fi nal

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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GOVT RAISES JUTE MSP TO ₹5,650/ QUINTAL

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a minimum support price of Rs 5,650 per quintal for raw jute for marketing season 2025-26, an increase of 6 per cent or Rs 315 over the previous MSP.

The decision was taken at the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, informed Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

The new Minimum Support Prices (MSP) ensure return of 66.8 per cent over all-India weighted average cost of production and will benefit growers, the minister said.

The government has increased MSP of raw jute from Rs 2,400 per quintal in 2014-15 to Rs 5,650 per quintal for 2025-26 marketing season, an increase of 2.35 times.

The approved MSP of raw jute for Marketing season 2025-26 is in line with the principle of fixing MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times all India weighted average cost of production as announced by the Government in the Budget 2018-19, an official release said. It is to be noted here that livelihood of 40 lakh farm families directly or indirectly depends on jute industry. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

India to take back 18K citizens from US

In 1st meet with Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Rubio flags 'irregular immigration'

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

India's government is prepared to work with Donald Trump's administration to identify and take back at least 18,000 citizens residing illegally in the US, an early signal from New Delhi that it's willing to comply with the incoming American president and avoid a trade war.

This decision was taken ahead of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's meet with newly-appointed Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Rubio expressed Trump administration's desire to advance economic ties with India, and address concerns related to irregular migration.

Rubio, 53, opted to have his first bilateral meeting with his Indian counterpart, underlining the importance the Trump administration attaches to strengthening ties with India.

He met Jaishankar, 70, at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department, soon after a Quad ministerial meeting.

The two top diplomats affirmed a shared commitment to continuing to strengthen the India-US partnership, she said.

"They discussed a wide range of topics, including regional issues and opportunities to further deepen the US-India relationship, in particular on critical and emerging technologies, defence cooperation, energy, and on advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region," Bruce said.

In a post on X after the meeting, Jaishankar said he was delighted to meet Rubio for his first bilateral meeting after assuming charge as secretary of state. —PTI

>>>More on Pages 5 & 6

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a meeting, in Washington DC ***PHOTO: PTI***

LAWMAKERS BAT FOR BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP IN US

Indian-American lawmakers have opposed the executive order by US President Donald Trump on changes in birthright citizenship (BRC), a move likely to hit not only illegal immigrants from around the world but also students and professionals from India. On Monday, Trump signed an order declaring that future children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer be treated as citizens. The order would extend even to the children of some mothers in the country legally but temporarily, such as foreign students or tourists. Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna said changes in birthright citizenship as done through the executive order would impact newborn babies.

Japan FM Takeshi Iwaya, EAM S Jaishankar, US' Marco Rubio and Aus' Penny Wong during a Quad meeting, in Washington DC ***PHOTO: PTI***

In 1st meet under Trump 2.0, Quad warns China

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

On his first full day in office on Tuesday, the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio held the first Quad ministerial meeting with Australia, India and Japan and jointly warned against changing the status quo in Indo-Pacific via coercive actions, in a veiled but clear warning to China over its actions at sea.

US Secretary of State Rubio hosted External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Penny Wong from Australia and Japan's Iwaya Takeshi for his first multilateral meeting as the top American diplomat.

At the conclusion of the meeting which lasted for about an hour, the ministers reconfirmed the Quad Leadership Summit in India later this year. India will host the 2025 Quad Leaders Summit.

In a post on X, Jaishankar said the meeting sent a clear message that in an uncertain and volatile world, Quad will continue to be a force for global good. *—PTI*

JD(U) sacks Manipur head for quitting govt

IMPHAL, 22 JAN

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's party Janata Dal (United) sacked its Manipur chief Ksh Biren Singh today, after he sent a letter to the Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla saying the JD(U) has withdrawn support to the BJP-led state government.

The lone JDU MLA in the state, Md Abdul Nasir, will sit in the Opposition benches, the party said on Wednesday.

The suspension comes amid growing speculation about JD(U)'s ties with BJP.

Party's national spokesperson Rajiv Ranjan said Singh's removal was due to indiscipline and asserted that the party would continue to support the BJP-led government in the northeastern state.

Ranjan affirmed that the JD(U) remains committed to supporting the BJP-led NDA, not just in Manipur but across the country.

The withdrawal, however, will not have any impact on the Biren Singh government as the BJP has 37 seats in the 60-member Assembly and is also supported by five MLAs of Naga People's Front. *—PTI*

Nitish Kumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

Chhattisgarh Naxal encounter death toll reaches 16

GARIABAND, 22 JAN

The bodies of two more Naxalites were recovered in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband, where an encounter took place recently between the security forces and Maoists, police said on Wednesday. With this, the number of Naxalites killed during the operation has risen to 16, they said. On Tuesday, the police said that 14 Naxalites, including a top CPI (Maoists) leader who was carrying a cash reward of Rs 1 crore on his head, were killed in a joint operation by the central and state police forces in Mainpur police station area along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border. ***—PTI***

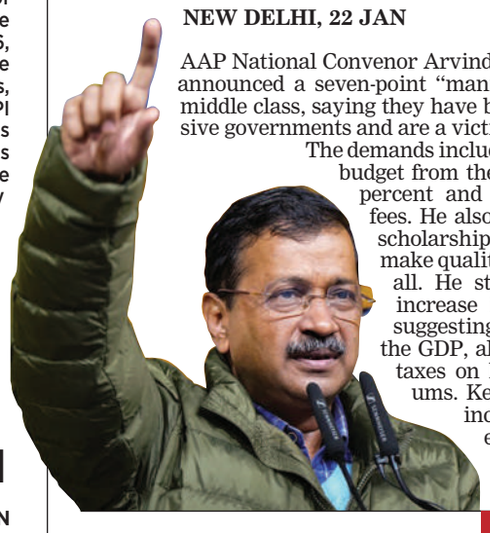
AAP flays 'tax terrorism' in manifesto

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced a seven-point "manifesto" for the country's middle class, saying they have been neglected by successive governments and are a victim of "tax terrorism".

The demands included raising the education budget from the current 2 percent to 10 percent and capping private school fees. He also proposed subsidies and scholarships for higher education to make quality education accessible to all. He stressed the need for an increase in healthcare spending, suggesting a rise to 10 percent of the GDP, along with the removal of taxes on health insurance premiums. Kejriwal also called for an increase in the income tax exemption limit. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3



Farmers protest: SC says Dallewal took medical aid

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Supreme Court on Wednesday kept in abeyance a plea for contempt action against Punjab government officials after noting that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, on a hunger strike, was undergoing medical treatment without breaking his fast. A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan noted that representatives from Central government met the protesting farmers over their various demands, including legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops, and another meeting was scheduled on 14 February in Chandigarh. Calling it a "positive development", the bench noted Dallewal, whose health condition had deteriorated due to fast for about 50 days, was now getting better, and would meet the delegation in Chandigarh .***—PTI***

THE ACCIDENT ZONE

10 killed, 15 injured after truck overturns in Uttara Kannada

BELAGAVI, 22 JAN

Ten people were killed and 15 others injured when a truck overturned after hitting another vehicle in Gullapur Ghat section of National Highway 63 in Yallapur taluk of Uttara Kannada district on Wednesday morning.

Uttara Kannada Superintendent of Police M Narayan said the truck laden with vegetable and fruits rammed another large vehicle from the rear before falling into a ditch along the national highway in Gullapur Ghat around 3.30 am.

All of the victims were sleeping on top of the cargo when the accident occurred. The truck fell on them when it overturned, Narayan said.

Police identified the deceased as Fayaz Jamakhandi, 45, Wasim Mudageri, 35, Izaz Mulla, 20, Sadiq Basha, 30, Gulam Hussian Javali, 40, Imtiyaz Mulakeri, 36, Alfaz Jaffar Mandakki, 25, Jilani Abdul Jakati, 25 and Aslam Baabuli Benni, 24. The identity of another victim is yet to be known.

Yallapur Inspector Ramesh Honnapur said the injured persons have been admitted to the Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) at Hubballi. He said the driver could not see the vehicle in front because of thick fog.

The victims hail from Savanoor in Haveri district. They were taking the vegetables to markets at Ankola and Kumata.

Condoling the tragic incident, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the families would be paid compensation of Rs 3 lakh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured will be given Rs 50,000. *—PTI*

A crane lifts a lorry that overturned in Yellapur, in Uttar Kannada on Wednesday ***PHOTO:PTI***

3 STUDENTS AMONG 4 KILLED IN RAICHUR CRASH

RAICHUR, 22 JAN

Four people, including three students of Gurusarvabhaubma Sanskrit Vidyapeet in Mantralaya of Raichur district, were killed and 10 others injured after the jeep they were travelling suffered a broken axle and overturned near Araginamar in Sindanoor taluk on Tuesday, police said.

The deceased are Hayavandan Pralhadachari, 18, from Ballari; Sujeyendra Krishnamurty, 22, from Mantralaya; Abhilash Ashwat Bali, 20, from Koppal and vehicle driver Shiva Somanna, 20.

.The group was going to Narahari temple at Anegundi from Mantralaya when the accident occurred.

"The vehicle overturned thrice before coming to a stop," SP Puttamadaiah said. *—Salar News*

12 dead after jumping out of train, hit by another

JALGAON, 22 JAN

At least 12 passengers were killed on Wednesday evening when they jumped from their train in panic due to a `fire incident', only to be run over by another train on the adjacent tracks in North Maharashtra's Jalgaon district, officials said.

The accident took place between Maheji and Pardhade stations near Pachora, more than 400 km from Mumbai, where the 12533 Lucknow-Mumbai Pushpak Express had halted after someone pulled the chain around 5 pm,

Pushpak Express departed from the spot in just 15 minutes, while the Karnataka Express was removed within 20 minutes after the accident, a railway official said.

Government and private hospitals in the area have been instructed to be ready to treat injured passengers, said Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on X. Maharashtra announced a Rs 5 lakh ex gracia for the kin of those killed. *—PTI*

AT WEF MEET

Naidu urges Google to open unit in Andhra

AMARAVATI, 22 JAN

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday requested tech powerhouse Google to consider Visakhapatnam as a probable chip design and manufacture centre.

With Google ramping up its chip production for server operations, Naidu, during the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, pitched the port city as an ideal location for the company to set up a chip design centre.

The CM also appealed to Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kuria to establish a chip manufacturing unit in the state, integrating it into the Google Cloud server supply chain, and expressed his desire for Andhra Pradesh to become a hub for Google's server operations. In addition, Naidu met Muhammad Taufiq, President and Group CEO of Petronas, and urged the company to invest in the emerging petrochemical hub at Mulapeta. He also requested Petronas to consider setting up a global capability centre in the state. Petronas, aiming to produce 5 million tonne of green ammonia by 2030, is looking to invest in green hydrogen, green ammonia, and green molecules in India.

As part of its 5 MT green ammonia target, Petronas is expected to invest up to Rs 15,000 crore in a plant in Kakinada, according to the release. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

Andhra CM N Chandrababu Naidu speaks at CII session on the sidelines of World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, in Switzerland ***PHOTO: PTI***

SL REPATRIATES 41 INDIAN FISHERMEN

COLOMBO, 22 JAN

Forty-one Indian fishermen detained by the Sri Lanka Navy have been repatriated by authorities here, the Indian mission here said on Wednesday.

Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters.

"41 Indian fishermen successfully repatriated from Sri Lanka! They are currently on their way home," the Indian High Commission here said on X.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters.

The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Father & son held for counterfeiting in Mysuru

MYSURU, 22 JAN

T Narasipura Police have apprehended a father-son pair, identified as Nagesh (25) and Shivaprasad (48), for allegedly producing and circulating counterfeit currency in rural areas, specifically at Hiriyur village. Following a tip-off, police conducted a raid on their farm's cattle shed, discovering equipment used for counterfeiting, including a photocopier and printer. During the operation, officers seized counterfeit notes totalling Rs 25,500, along with watermarks, ink, and other related materials. Additionally, two mobile phones, an adapter, a 16 GB pen drive, and an ATM card were confiscated. Superintendent of Police N Vishnuvardhan confirmed that a case has been registered and the investigation is ongoing. *—Salar News*

Son held for wild boar poaching, father flees

MYSURU, 22 JAN

Forest department officials have apprehended a man for poaching a wild boar at the MM Hills wildlife sanctuary in Hanur taluk, Chamarajangar district. The suspect, identified as Palaniswamy from Pacchedoddi near Ajjipura, was arrested following a tip-off. Department personnel conducted a raid at the accused's farmhouse on Monday night, where they seized the meat prepared for meals. Another suspect, Venkatesh, Palaniswamy's father, managed to flee the scene. Palaniswamy has since been remanded to judicial custody as investigations continue into the poaching incident, raising concerns over wildlife protection efforts in the region. *—Salar News*

138 booked for using tinted glasses in vehicles

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Bengaluru Traffic Police registered 138 cases against drivers for using tinted glasses during a special drive conducted across the city on Wednesday to enforce the ban on tinted glasses. The drive, aimed at ensuring compliance with the Motor Vehicles Act and promoting road safety, was conducted, they said. The Bengaluru Traffic Police have advised vehicle owners to remove tinted glasses immediately to avoid fines and penalties.*—PTI*

Vishvaraj Foundation expands skill centre in B'luru

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Vishvaraj Foundation has enhanced its Skill Development Centre in Geetanjali Nagar by launching a Sewing Machine Training course, responding to community demand for financial independence, particularly among underprivileged women. The course was inaugurated by prominent figures including Smt. Jayalakshmi BS and Mrs. Smitha GV, alongside officials from Vishvaraj Environment Pvt. Ltd., local school administration, and eager students. Originally inaugurated at Sri Guru Shantanand Swamy High School in Deepanjali Nagar, the centre already provides valuable training in Computer skills and Spoken English, aiming to equip youth with essential skills for better livelihood opportunities. The introduction of the sewing course has been met with enthusiasm, reflecting the foundation's commitment to empowering individuals and fostering community development through education and training. *—Salar News*

Feud in BJP comes to fore during core panel meeting

The meeting was marred by Yatnal vs Vijayendra fight

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

The factional feud within BJP surfaced during the core committee mw eeting chaired by the party's National General Secretary and State in-charge Radha Mohan Das Agarwal, party sources said on Wednesday.

Top party sources told PTI that the issue of Vijayapura BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and his faction publicly targeting BJP State president Vijayendra and his father and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa surfaced during the meeting.

Vijayendra's loyalists sought to know during the meeting about the action taken against Yatnal for putting the party in an embarrassing situation time and again, which was hampering BJP's prospects, the sources added.

Yatnal had recently called Vijayendra "corrupt" who had amassed wealth through unfair means. He also appealed to Yediyurappa to pave way for others instead of succumbing to infatuation for his son.

Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and BY Vijayendra *PHOTOS:ANI*

Agarwal told the MLAs that the party high command was aware of it and would take necessary steps. The committee, according to sources, discussed the appointment of district level party office bearers, including the district presidents. This will finally culminate in choosing the party state president, which is presently occupied by Shikaripura MLA BY Vijayendra.

In this regard, names of three probable candidates from each district will be sent to the party high command, which will choose one among them on the merit basis, BJP MLC C T Ravi told reporters.

According to Malleswaram MLA and former deputy chief minister CN Ashwath Narayan, suggestions were sought to strengthen the party. He added that a clear message had been delivered to ensure that the party's internal matters should remain "within the four walls" and should not go out.

Sriramulu threatens to quit BJP

B Sriramulu accused mining baron and MLA Gali G Janardhana Reddy of attempting to undermine his political career and threatened to quit the party after BJP members blamed the former minister for party's rout in Sandur bypolls,.

He told the committee members that he toiled hard during the election and put all his efforts to ensure the party's victory. Yet, BJP candidate Bangaru Hanumantha lost in the bypoll.

Addressing the media, Sriramulu claimed Agarwal had humiliated him during the meeting.

Countering these allegations, Sriramulu pointed out that the committee led by former chief minister DV.Sadananda Gowda had not yet submitted its report on the bypoll defeat.

According to sources close to Sriramulu, he was upset with the Gangavathi MLA G Janardhana Reddy for allegedly giving wrong feedbacks to the party high command against him.

Reddy and Sriramulu were close friends, who have now fallen apart, sources said. *—Salar News with Agencies*

HOSPITAL DENIES NEGLIGENCE

Newborn's leg fractured during delivery at BIMS

BIDAR, 22 JAN

A newborn's right leg was fractured during delivery a month ago, allegedly because of an error on the part of a nurse, at Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS), sources said on Wednesday.

The family, which is struggling to meet the cost of the treatment, fears that the child could suffer permanent disability because of the fracture.

The incident took place on 14 December. Ruparani Madiwala, a resident of Mangalpet in Bidar, was admitted to the hospital for delivery. She gave birth to a baby boy within an hour and a half after admission.

The woman's family had brought to the notice of the doctors that the baby's position was upside down in the mother's womb and requested the doctors to conduct a caesarean operation instead of going for normal delivery.

He said the nurse demanded Rs 3,000 to conduct the caesarean operation and insisted that otherwise they would they would proceed with a normal delivery, Rupani's husband Nagendra said.

A scan conducted after the delivery revealed that the newborn's right femur bone was broken.

The family members requested BIMS Director Shivkumar Shetagar and social activist Kamalakar Hegade to take action against the guilty medical staff, but in vain.

Gynecologist Dr Uma Dhasmukh told **Salar News** the baby's leg suffered the fracture when the nurse pulled it out of the mother's womb.

"This is all normal during childbirth. There is no negligence. The bone is fractured, but it will heal in three months," she said. *—Salar News*

'Next CM' talk refuses to end in Cong

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Despite party high command's strict instructions, the talk about the 'next chief minister' refuses to die down in the ruling Congress in Karnataka.

In a show of strength, Congress leader Parashuram Pujari of Hire Bagewadi and his supporters performed special pooja at Sigandur Chowdeshwari Devi temple in Belagavi on Wednesday to see his leader and state Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi as the next chief minister.

They performed pooja, holding posters which had Jarkiholi's picture and the message 'Satish Jarkiholi, the next Chief Minister'.

On Tuesday, the supporters of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar raised the chief minister issue during the 'Gandhi Bharat' event in Belagavi.

Holding a photograph of Shivakumar, who is also the Congress State unit President, the supporters raised slogans - "Shivakumar should be made the next Chief Minister".

A Digambar Jain monk, Gunadhara Nandi, along with 18 other senior monks of the Jain order blessed Shivakumar to become the next chief minister.

At the time of Congress coming to power in May 2023, there were reports about a pact that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would head the state for the first two and half years and Shivakumar would be the chief minister for the rest of the term.

While some Vokkaliga leaders started a campaign to make Shivakumar as chief minister, Jarkiholi, who is considered close to Siddaramaiah, underlined the need for a 'full time Congress state president'.

"We ministers are not able to focus on our party works and there is a need for a full time Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president," Jarkiholi had recently said. *—PTI*

FIGHT FOR RIGHTS

Dalit Hakkugala Samiti protested at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday, demanding special grants in the upcoming State Budget *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

POOJA PERFORMED FOR RAM MANDIR AT HAROHALLI

MYSURU, 22 JAN

Villagers in Harohalli, located in the Jayapura hobli of Mysuru taluk, marked the first anniversary of the inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya with a Sankalpa Pooja for their own Ram Mandir to be built in their area on Wednesday.

The ceremony centred around the Krishna Shila stone, intended for the Shri Ram Lalla idol, sourced from the land of local dalit resident H Ramdas.

The Ram Lalla idol, crafted by sculptor Arun Yogiraj, was commissioned following the stone's selection and subsequently installed during the Pran Prathistana mahotsav at Ayodhya Ram Mandir, officiated by Prime Minister Modi on 22 January, 2024.

In a display of commitment, the villagers took an oath to construct a Ram Mandir, intending to create 'the Ayodhya of the South'. This year's puja took place on the same date as last year's announcement, further solidifying their resolve.

Local MLA GT Devegowda attended the rituals, while temple priest Prahlad Rao conducted the ceremonial poojas, marking a significant moment in the village's spiritual journey. *—Salar News*

Congress condemns ED's actions against CM

MYSURU, 22 JAN

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee Spokesperson M Lakshmana has condemned the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) recent provisional attachment of 142 immovable properties valued at Rs 300 crore as part of a money laundering investigation involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

He described the action as politically motivated and accused the ED of acting as a mouthpiece for the RSS and BJP.

At a press conference, Lakshmana demanded that the ED disclose the beneficiaries behind the attached properties, arguing that the agency's allegations against Siddaramaiah are unfounded. He also referred to information obtained via the Right to Information Act, which revealed that the ED had actually attached 168 properties, many of which belonged to real estate developers linked to the JD(S) and BJP. He called these properties "benami."

Lakshmana criticized the ED for pursuing the case based solely on complaints from a person with a criminal background, questioning the legitimacy of the investigation given that no court or agency had mandated it. He also remarked on the misuse of central agencies against political opponents of the BJP, claiming this trend has escalated over the past decade.

- Additionally, he accused the ED of artificially inflating property values related to CM Siddaramaiah's wife, BM Parvathi, and asserted that there was no real market demand in the area in question. The Congress party continues to scrutinise funding sources for the complainant in this case.

Additionally, he accused the ED of artificially inflating property values related to CM Siddaramaiah's wife, BM Parvathi, and asserted that there was no real market demand in the area in question. The Congress party continues to scrutinise funding sources for the complainant in this case. *—Salar News*

Prove I was involved in MUDA scam: JD(S) MLA to Yatnal

Basanagouda Yatnal and GT Devegowda *PHOTO: X*

MYSURU, 22 JAN

Chamundeshwari MLA and former JD(S) leader GT Devegowda has reacted strongly to claims made by BJP leader Basanagouda Patil Yatnal regarding his involvement in the MUDA scam. Speaking to reporters, Devegowda challenged Yatnal to substantiate his allegations, insisting he is prepared to reveal Yatnal's own corrupt practices.

Devegowda alleged that Yatnal, a former Union Minister, has significantly increased his wealth since entering politics and accused him of hypocrisy, noting that Yatnal faces multiple corruption charges, including an FIR related to a sugar mill establishment.

On speculation about Nikhil Kumaraswamy potentially becoming the state JDS president, Devegowda stated that while the party consults with its members, ultimate decisions rest with HD Kumaraswamy. He also admonished Yatnal to refrain from making singular statements, warning that voters are closely monitoring the actions of all political leaders.

- Chamundeshwari MLA and former JD(S) leader GT Devegowda has reacted strongly to claims made by BJP leader Basanagouda Patil Yatnal regarding his involvement in the MUDA scam.

Despite recent visits from various JDS leaders, Devegowda confirmed that he would not engage in party organisation activities or join another political party. *—Salar News*

MAN ATTEMPTS TO SET WIFE ON FIRE IN HD KOTE, HELD

MYSURU, 22 JAN

A man has been taken into police custody on charges of attempted murder after allegedly dousing his wife in petrol and setting her ablaze during a domestic dispute in Hanumanthanagar, HD Kote, on Wednesday evening. The victim, identified as Madhura, sustained severe burns covering 70 per cent of her body and is currently fighting for her life in a private hospital in Mysuru.

The accused, Malleshnaik, a mechanic at the KSRTC depot in HD Kote, hails from BB Tanda in Vijayanagar district.

He married Madhura, also from the same village, eight years ago, and the couple has a son. Over the past few years, Malleshnaik had become increasingly suspicious of his wife's fidelity, leading to frequent arguments, especially after he returned home from work each night.

Madhura returned home on Tuesday after visiting her native place, and a subsequent altercation led to the alleged attack. Madhura's relatives have since filed a complaint against Malleshnaik and his mother, Gowri, for demanding dowry and inflicting mental and physical harassment. *—Salar News*

'FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE'

Guv urges students to innovate for farmers

SHIVAMOGGA, 22 JAN

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Wednesday emphasised the critical role of innovation and technology in transforming agriculture and horticulture, stressing the need to adopt new technologies and smart farming practices to address global challenges.

He highlighted the pressing need for organic farming and the adoption of smart farming techniques to tackle issues such as population growth, climate change, and resource depletion.

"In this era of innovation and technological advancements, agriculture and horticulture require solutions driven by creativity, technical expertise, and hard work," he said during the 9th convocation of Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot

"Your role as agriculture students is pivotal in ensuring food security, combating climate change, and safeguarding humanity's future," he added.

According to a statement from the Governor's office, Gehlot underscored the importance of sustainable development and environmental protection in agriculture, saying, "Agriculture is not merely a subject of study—it's the backbone of our nation. Your knowledge and contributions are vital for building an eco-conscious society and enhancing the livelihoods of millions of farmers and entrepreneurs."

Reflecting on the broader impact of the sector, he said, "Agriculture and horticulture form the foundation of our civilization and culture. This field not only sustains us with food but also creates employment, conserves biodiversity, and addresses climate change. With your knowledge and research, this sector can achieve new heights."

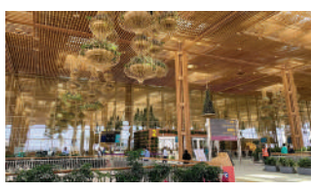
During the convocation, the Governor conferred an honorary doctorate on veteran leader Kagodu Thimmappa, acknowledging his significant contributions to society, the statement said. *—PTI*

KIA first to achieve ACI accessibility accreditation

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Kempegowda International Airport has become the first airport in India to receive Level 1 Accreditation under the Airports Council International (ACI) Accessibility Enhancement Accreditation (AEA) Programme, officials said. The AEA Programme is designed to enhance accessibility and inclusion at airports by addressing the needs of persons with disabilities and older travellers, officials said.

The recognition highlights the airport's proactive efforts to create an inclusive and accessible environment, the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) said in a statement.



"At BLR Airport, accessibility is integrated into its core operations. A dedicated committee oversees initiatives to enhance facilities, services, and transportation options tailored for Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM) and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)." The statement said. "Proactive measures include continuous staff training to ensure empathetic and personalised support for passengers." *—PTI*

Two militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, 22 JAN

Two militants were arrested in separate operations in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Wednesday. An active member of the banned Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA), identified as Yengkhom Bhogen Singh, 50, was arrested from Top Khongnangkhong on Tuesday, they said. A member of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (MFL), identified as Pukhrambam Thoiba Singh, 38, was arrested from Mantripukhri Bazar, police said. —*PTI*

Lawyers' strike delays RaGa's defamation case

SULTANPUR, 22 JAN

The defamation case against Rahul Gandhi was adjourned due to the continuing strike of lawyers. Plaintiff Vijay Mishra's counsel Santosh Kumar Pandey said that 30, January had been set as the date for hearing. Mishra, a local BJP politician, filed a defamation complaint against Gandhi in 2018 in the court alleging that during the Karnataka elections, the Congress leader made an offensive remark about BJP leader Amit Shah. The case was pending for five years until the court issued a warrant in December, 2023. Gandhi has claimed innocence and said a political conspiracy was being plotted against him. The court subsequently directed the plaintiff to present evidence. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Centre will scrap Tungsten mining project: Annamalai

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, 22 JAN

BJP state Chief K Annamalai assured people that the Centre will make an official announcement on Thursday cancelling the 4000-acre Tungsten mining project in Melur, Madurai. Annamalai highlighted the opposition to the project from locals in and around Melur after Hindustan Zinc Limited won a bidding war to secure rights to the region. The Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a resolution in December urging the Centre to immediately cancel the rights. Annamalai said that the Geological Survey of India in November 2021 submitted a report on the matter and that the TN government noted the presence of a bio-diversity hotspot. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Stalin blames AIADMK for TN's revenue deficit

SIVAGANGA, 22 JAN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin hit out at Leader of Opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami for his criticism of the state's fiscal situation, and said it was the latter's AIADMK that made Tamil Nadu a revenue-deficit state a decade ago. Stalin's sharp response came a day after the AIADMK chief targeted the DMK dispensation over the state's fiscal condition, claiming Tamil Nadu has emerged as a state with the highest debt since the DMK came to power about four years ago. Hitting back, Stalin said Tamil Nadu was a "revenue-surplus" state in 2011, before the AIADMK came to power. "It was the AIADMK government that made a revenue-surplus state in 2011, a revenue-deficit one in 2013." Stalin said. "They made Tamil Nadu struggle as the state with highest revenue-deficit during 2017-19. We have rescued Tamil Nadu." —*PTI*

Maken accuses AAP govt of ₹382cr scam

He says 14 CAG reports expose corruption

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

All India Congress Committee Treasurer Ajay Maken at a press conference, in New Delhi on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Congress leader Ajay Maken on Wednesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party government of corruption involving Rs 382 crore in the healthcare sector.

Maken said the AAP used to make allegations against the Congress government on the basis of CAG reports. At present, 14 CAG reports are showing serious corruption charges against the AAP government, he said.

Citing a CAG report, Maken said there was a scam of Rs 382 crore involving former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

AAP claimed that they would complete works before time and save money. But the CAG report states that only three new hospitals were built in the past 10 years, Maken said.

Works on all three hospitals were started during the time of the Congress government. The delay of Indira Gandhi Hospital was five years, Burari Hospital was delayed by six years and Maulana Azad Dental Hospital was delayed by three years, he said.

"Apart from this, there was a total of Rs 314 crore extra spent on Indira Gandhi Hospital over the tender amount. An amount of Rs 41 crore extra was spent on Burari Hospital and Rs 26 crore on the Maulana Azad Dental Hospital. A total of Rs 382.52 crore was spent extra from the tendered amount. I am not saying this, the CAG report is saying this," Maken said. "I am directly accusing Kejriwal and his government that this is the biggest reason for stopping the CAG report," he further stated. According to the CAG, a total of 15 plots were acquired by the Delhi government between 2007 and 2015 but the works were not started. Between the financial years 2016–17 and 2021–22, Rs 2,623 crore of the funds sanctioned for infrastructure projects lapsed, Maken said. —*PTI*

BJP's Parvesh to sue Kejri, Mann for ₹100cr

Kejri had accused him of calling Punjabis a threat

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

BJP MP Parvesh Verma on Wednesday said he will file Rs 100 crore defamation suits against AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, accusing them of levelling false allegations against him.

Verma said if he wins the cases, he plans to use the money for development work in his New Delhi constituency, from where he is contesting the 5 February Assembly polls against Kejriwal.

On Kejriwal's allegation that Verma has called Punjabis a threat to the country, the BJP leader said, "I don't need to mention what I and my family have done for the Sikh community."

Verma alleged that thousands of cars from Punjab, carrying AAP ministers, legislators and even their Chief Minister Mann, have entered Delhi in recent days to campaign for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

"I don't have a problem with their campaigning, but they are influencing voters by distributing CCTV cameras from Chinese companies, liquor, and money," Verma claimed, adding he has filed complaints with the police and the Election Commission.

Parvesh Verma PHOTO: PTI

Arvind Kejriwal PHOTO: PTI

The BJP leader accused Kejriwal of resorting to lies out of frustration over his party's "imminent defeat."

He also criticised Kejriwal for allegedly insulting Hindu sentiments through his remarks on Ram and Hanuman.

Meanwhile, AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal alleged BJP is using the city police to disrupt his party's poll campaign and intimidate voters ahead of the 5 February Assembly elections.

"All the Delhi Police is with the BJP. No one is there for the security and safety of the people. One of the SHOs told me they get direct instructions from the Ministry of Home Affairs to disrupt our rallies," Kejriwal told a press conference, also addressed by Chief Minister Atishi and senior party leader Saurabh Bharadwaj. —*PTI*

AHEAD OF POLLS

Manjhi threatens to quit Bihar Cabinet

PATNA, 22 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi caused a flutter after he threatened to give up his Cabinet berth, alleging that his Hindustani Awam Morcha was not getting a square deal in the NDA, ahead of the Bihar assembly polls due later this year.

The former Bihar chief minister made the statement on Tuesday at a public meeting in Munger district, where he voiced anguish over his party not being taken into account by the BJP-led coalition in seat-sharing arrangements.

"We got nothing in Jharkhand and Delhi. It may be said that I did not make any demand. But is it justice? I was overlooked because I had no standing in these states. So we must prove our worth in Bihar," Manjhi said. Quoting a verse from the Ramayana which implies that often fear begets respect, the 80-year-old leader remarked, "It seems I will have to resign from the Cabinet." "Some may say I am fighting with the NDA. But, the leadership of Narendra Modi has been such that there is no question of a revolt. I am making a plea, not indulging in a confrontation, " he said.

Manjhi, who is the lone MP of his party that has four MLAs in the 243-strong Assembly, said that he wanted 40 seats for the Hindustani Awam Morcha in the Bihar Assembly polls. —*PTI*

Cabinet approves continuation of NHM for another 5 years

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was apprised of the progress under the National Health Mission (NHM) during the years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Union Cabinet approved continuation of the National Health Mission for another five years.

Cabinet was also apprised of accelerated decline in Maternal Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate, under 5 Mortality Rate and Total Fertility Rate and the progress in respect of various diseases programmes like TB, Malaria, Kala-Azar, Dengue, Tuberculosis, Leprosy, Viral Hepatitis etc and new initiatives undertaken such as National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission.

Briefing reporters about the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting, Union minister Piyush Goyal said the Mission has met historic targets in the last 10 years.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal briefs the media on Cabinet decisions at National Media Centre, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Goyal pointed out that nearly 12 lakh healthcare workers joined the NHM between 2021 and 2022 and India fought the COVID-19 pandemic under the Mission. NHM has significantly contributed to improving India's public health outcomes through its relentless efforts in expanding human resources, addressing critical health issues, and fostering an integrated response to health emergencies. Around 500 stroke units are operational across the country and the Centre is committed to expanding this network to ensure wider access to specialised care, Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said. Stroke prevention remains a critical priority as India addresses the dual challenge of communicable and non-communicable diseases, she said. —*PTI*

One law needed for all religious lands: VHP to Waqf

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Wednesday said it has written to the Joint Committee of Parliament (JPC) on Waqf (Amendment) Bill, suggesting it to consider proposing enactment of one law for endowments of religious properties of all the religions in the country.

The letter sent to the parliamentary panel through VHP president Alok Kumar has suggested that instead of different laws governing control and management of properties of different religious communities, there should be a single law for endowments of all religious properties in the country, the organisation said in a statement.

In the letter, VHP said it has underlined that Waqf has been "defined as a permanent dedication of any movable or immovable property for any purpose recognised by the Muslim Law as pious, religious or charitable". —*PTI*

Beed murder accused sent to judicial custody

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 22 JAN

A court in Maharashtra's Beed on Wednesday remanded Walmik Karad, minister Dhananjay Munde's close aide who has been arrested in a case related to the murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh, in 14-day judicial custody.

Karad was produced, through video link, before the special court for Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) cases after the end of his SIT custody. The SIT of the state police did not seek his further custody.

While the court remanded him in judicial custody, Dhananjay Deshmukh, the murder victim's brother said while talking to the media that no accused in the case should get bail as they had created an "atmosphere of terror".

In response to an application made by Karad's lawyers, the court allowed him to use, while in prison, a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine which helps to treat sleep apnea, a police official said.

Sleep apnea is a disorder that causes breathing to repeatedly stop and start during sleep.

Walmik Karad PHOTO: PTI

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said those involved in murder case will not be spared and sought death sentence to the accused for the "heinous" crime.

Shinde said, "Be it Walmik Karad or anyone else, not a single person involved will be spared. For such heinous murders, there is no other punishment than the death penalty," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray accused the Maharashtra government of trying to save Karad. Thackeray said even BJP workers are asking when would Deshmukh get justice. "But what can be expected from government if the BJP workers are not getting justice," he added. —*PTI*

UP Cabinet approves key projects in Kumbh Mela

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, 22 JAN

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet met in the Maha Kumbh Mela area on Wednesday following which Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced several key decisions on development projects and policy changes aimed at boosting the state's growth.

One of the major announcements was related to the state's aerospace and defense policies. The CM said the aerospace and defense policy, initially implemented in 2018, has completed five years and will now be revamped.

"The revised policy will include new incentives to attract large investments into the sector," Adityanath announced.

Meanwhile, two men, including a journalist, were arrested for allegedly making objectionable comments about the Maha Kumbh and Hindu deities, police said. —*PTI*

10 YEARS

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao ended gender bias: PM

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

With the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative completing 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said it has been instrumental in overcoming gender bias and at the same created the right environment to ensure that the girl child has access to education and opportunities to achieve her dreams.

"Today, we mark 10 years of the #BetiBachaoBetiPadhao movement. Over the past decade, it has become a transformative, people-powered initiative and has drawn participation from people across all walks of life," Modi said.

The scheme has been instrumental in overcoming gender biases and at the same time it has created the right environment to ensure that the girl child has access to education and opportunities to achieve her dreams, the prime minister said.

PM Narendra Modi said the scheme created the right environment to ensure that the girl child has access to education PHOTO: PTI

"Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the people and various community service organisations, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has achieved remarkable milestones," Modi said in his post on X.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah also hailed the scheme's completion of 10 years, saying that it gave a new dimension to the rights, education and respect of daughters. —*PTI*

'Save the daughters' is now 'save the criminals': Cong

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

As the government's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative completed 10 years, the Congress on Wednesday accused the BJP of hypocrisy and asked why the ruling party has adopted a policy of "save the criminals" instead of "save the daughters".

The Prime Minister launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme on 22 January, 2015.

In a post in Hindi on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Ten years of Beti Bachao, our three questions to Modi ji – Why did the BJP adopt the policy of 'save the criminals' instead of 'save the daughters'? When will the women of Manipur get justice? Whether it is the Dalit daughter of Hathras or the daughter of Unnao, or our champion female wrestler, why has the BJP always protected criminals?" Why 43 crimes against women are recorded every hour in the country, Kharge asked. "Modi ji has spoken about women's safety many times in his speeches from the Red Fort, but why there is a difference between his words and actions?" the Congress president said.

Congress party President Mallikarjun Kharge said that there is a difference between PM Modi's words and actions PHOTO: PTI

What is the reason that till 2019, nearly 80 per cent of the total amount allocated for the scheme was spent only on media advertising? he asked. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

ZSI finds 23 species of blood-sucking flies in Andamans

KOLKATA, 22 JAN

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) researchers have identified 23 species of blood-sucking flies in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including 13 species previously unreported in India, ZSI director Dhriti Banerjee said. The study, recently published in the journal 'Parasites and Vectors', is the first comprehensive survey of these insects in the region. Locally called 'Bhusi flies,' these insects belong to the Culicoides genus and are similar to mosquitoes in their feeding habits. They primarily feed on the blood of livestock like sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as wild animals such as deer. The study highlights five species that can transmit the Blue Tongue Disease virus, a condition that can be fatal to livestock and cause significant economic losses in animal husbandry. —PTI

Two Maoists killed in Jharkhand's Bokaro district

BOKARO, 22 JAN

Two Maoists were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's Bokaro district on Wednesday morning, police said. The incident took place in the Penk Narayanpur police station area in the early hours, they said. "A large cache of arms and ammunition, including sophisticated weapons such as AK-47 and INSAS rifles, were also recovered," a senior police official told PTI. He said that a search operation was still underway in the area —PTI

Five men awarded death penalty for gangrape, murder

KORBA, 22 JAN

A fast-track court in Korba district of Chhattisgarh has sentenced five men to death for gangraping and killing a 16-year-old girl and murder of her two family members in 2021. The court sentenced another accused in the case to life imprisonment. The court sentenced another accused Umashanakar Yadav, 26, to life imprisonment, he said. While delivering the judgement on 15 January, the court said that the inhuman and cruel act of the accused was extremely perverted, heinous, brutal and cowardly, he said. A copy of the order was made available on Monday. On 29 January, 2021, the teenage girl was allegedly raped and bludgeoned with stones before she was left to die in a forest near Gadhuproda village under Lemru police station area of Korba district. The accused also killed the girl's father, aged around 60, and his four-year-old granddaughter who were with her. —PTI

Class 8 girl ends life over harassment for fee at school

SURAT, 22 JAN

A Class 8 student allegedly died by suicide in Gujarat's Surat city, with her family members claiming that she took the extreme step after being punished by her school over non-payment of fees, police said Wednesday. The 14-year-old girl hanged herself at her home in the city's Godadara locality on Monday evening when her parents were away. The minor had stopped going to school after the Uttarayan festival on 14 January, and her parents had not deposited a fee of Rs 15,000 for a year ending March 2025, inspector Harshad Acharya of Godadara police station said. The girl's father claimed that the school did not allow his daughter to take her exams over non-payment of fees and made her stand outside her classroom. —PTI

RG Kar rape-murder: CBI to seek death for convict

State already in HC, demanding capital punishment

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The CBI will file an appeal before the Calcutta High Court, seeking death sentence for Sanjay Roy, who was sentenced to "life imprisonment until death" by a Sealdah court in the rape-cum-murder case of an on-duty doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, officials said Wednesday.

The agency received a legal advice suggesting that the case may be categorised as the "rarest of rare", deserving capital punishment, they said.

The agency is likely to file the appeal against the Sealdah court order as soon as possible with detailed arguments in favour of capital punishment, they said.

The agency's plea seeking death penalty for Roy was turned down by the trial court, where Additional District and Sessions Judge Anirban Das said that the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category.

A crowd gather in front of the Sealdah court which awarded life imprisonment until death to Sanjay Roy PHOTO: ANI

"The CBI prayed for the death penalty. The defence lawyer prayed that a jail term be given instead of the death penalty. This crime does not fall under the 'rarest of the rare' category," the judge said on Monday while sentencing Roy.

"I am sentencing you to life imprisonment, meaning till the last day of your life, for causing injury during the act of committing rape on the victim that led to her death...," the judge told Roy.

The West Bengal government has already approached the high court, challenging the verdict and seeking death penalty for Roy.

The CBI has opposed the state's right to file an appeal in the case, claiming that as it was the prosecuting agency, it had the right to appeal on the grounds of inadequacy of the sentence.

Appearing for the CBI, Deputy Solicitor General Rajdeep Majumdar on Wednesday opposed the state's submission, maintaining that the West Bengal government does not have the right to appeal against the trial court's order on the ground of inadequacy.

The high court said it would hear the CBI, the victim's family and the convict before deciding on the admission of the state government's appeal. The high court said it will hear the matter on 27 January. —PTI

Saif Ali Khan with auto driver Bhajan Singh Rana who took him to hospital after the attack PHOTO: X

Attacker jumped wall to enter Saif's building

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

The Bangladeshi national arrested for attacking Saif Ali Khan gained entry into the actor's building in Bandra, Mumbai, by scaling its compound wall and went inside the main entrance after finding the security guards asleep, police said.

The Mumbai police on Tuesday recreated the crime scene with the accused at the Satguru Sharan building in Bandra area, where the actor resides.

Khan, 54, was stabbed repeatedly by the intruder, Shariful Islam Shehzad Mohammad Rohilla Amin Fakir alias Vijay Das, 30, inside his 12-floor apartment in the wee hours of 16 Jan.

The actor suffered multiple stab injuries in the attack and underwent an emergency surgery at the Lilavati Hospital. He returned home on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh High Court has lifted the 2015 stay on the Pataudi family's historical properties, worth an estimated Rs 15,000 crore, bringing them closer to potential government acquisition under the Enemy Property Act, 1968. It include sites such as Flag Staff House, Noor-Us-Sabah Palace. —PTI

People pray at the burial place of those who died under mysterious circumstances in Badhaal village in J&K PHOTO: ANI

J&K village put under close watch

RAJOURI/JAMMU, 22 JAN

The remote Badhaal village in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district was on Wednesday declared a containment zone and prohibitory orders imposed on all public and private gatherings in the wake of the death of 17 people belonging to three families, officials said.

Another person belonging to the village has been admitted to a hospital in a critical condition, they said.

According to the order issued by additional district magistrate (Rajouri) Rajeev Kumar Khajuria, the village has been divided into three containment zones – the first covering all families where deaths have occurred.

"The houses of these affected families shall be sealed and entry will be totally restricted for all individuals, including their family members, unless otherwise authorised by the designated officers/officials."

In the containment zone 2, the order said the members of all families identified as close contacts of affected individuals be shifted to Government Medical College, Rajouri for continuous health monitoring which is mandatory.

All households will be covered under the containment zone-3 and staff will be deployed to ensure the continuous monitoring of food consumption, deployment of police personnel to enforce compliance and deployment of designated officers for maintenance of log books, the order said. —PTI

SC extends stay on mosque survey

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended its stay on the Allahabad High Court's order that permitted a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex in Mathura.

The complex stands adjacent to the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple, a site of significant religious importance for the Hindu community.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan said it will defer the hearing on the plea of the Committee of Management of Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah against the court-monitored survey of the mosque complex in the week commencing 1 April.

The Shahi Idgah mosque complex in Mathura stands adjacent to the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple PHOTO: X

The CJI said there were three issues pending now with the apex court and they are "the issue of an intra-court appeal (against consolidation of lawsuits filed by the Hindu litigants), the other one is the Act (challenge to the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991) itself. List (the Shahi Idgah matter) in the week commencing April 1."

The bench said, in the meanwhile, the interim order of the Allahabad High Court staying the court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex will continue to operate. —PTI

SC split on interim bail to Tahir

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

PHOTO: ANI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday delivered a split verdict on a plea filed by former councillor and Delhi riots accused Tahir Hussain seeking interim bail to campaign for assembly polls.

Even as Justice Pankaj Mithal dismissed Hussain's plea, saying no case was made out, Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah opined that he could be released on interim bail.

The matter would now be placed before Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna for the constitution of a new bench to decide the issue.

A violence that broke out in northeast Delhi on 24 February, 2020, left 53 dead and several injured. Hussain is accused in a case related to the riots, wherein he has been linked to the death of Intelligence Bureau staffer Ankit Sharma.

According to the prosecution, on 26 February, 2020, complainant Ravinder Kumar informed the Dayalpur police station that his son Sharma was missing since 25 February, 2020. Sharma's body was reportedly recovered from Khajuri Khas in the riot-affected area with 51 injuries. —PTI

SC grants women quota in Delhi tax associations

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed reserving the treasurer's post and 30 per cent seats for women in the executive committees of Delhi Sales Tax Bar Association and Delhi Tax Bar Association.

The SC also issued notice on a plea for 33 per cent reservation for women in Bangalore bar associations. —PTI

4 held for assaulting 2 women

GWALIOR, 22 JAN

Two women were allegedly beaten up, with one of them tied to an electric pole, in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district, police said on Wednesday, adding that four persons have been arrested in connection with the incident.

A purported video of the incident also surfaced on social media.

Police said assault, which took place in Dabra town on Tuesday evening, was the fallout of a dispute over vacating a house.

PHOTO: X

A police team reached the spot after receiving information that some women were being attacked over a dispute. They found a woman tied to an electricity pole and another lying on the ground, Dabra police station in-charge Yashwant Goyal said.

The woman, who was tied to the pole, told the police that one Vijay Agrawal and his associates assaulted them over an old dispute over vacating a house and threw out their belongings, the official said.

The police have registered a case against 14 persons, including Agrawal, of which four have been arrested, Goyal said. A search is on for the other accused, the official said. —PTI

MISUSE OF LAW

Man kills self citing wife's torture

INDORE, 22 JAN

A 28-year-old man in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city allegedly died by suicide claiming harassment by his wife and her relatives. He also left a note blaming the women for misusing the country's laws, police said on Wednesday.

In his purported suicide note, Nitin Padiyar also appealed to the Centre to change the laws, without mentioning any one in particular.

Padiyar allegedly hanged himself at his house in Banganga police station area on Monday night, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Ramsanehi Mishra said.

In the note, Padiyar mentioned the names of his wife, mother-in-law and other close relatives of his spouse, accusing them of harassment, the official said.

The allegations were being investigated and appropriate legal action will be taken, he said, adding that the autopsy of the deceased's body has been conducted.

In the note said, "I, Nitin Padiyar, request the Government of India to change the country's law because women are misusing it. If you do not change this legal system, then several men and their families will continue to be ruined every day."

"I request all the youth of India not to get married and if they do so, then get married after making an agreement," It read. —PTI

UNDER-COVER ROMANCE

Selfie with wife exposed slain Maoist to forces

BHUBANESWAR, 22 JAN

Chalapathi was careful in his movements and remained under cover for decades until a selfie with his wife led security forces to him.

One among the top seven in the CPI(Maoist) ranks, he was killed along with 13 associates in an operation at the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border.

Ramachandra Reddy, better known as Chalapathi, operated in the shadows and led the Maoist attack in Odisha's Nayagarh district in 2008 in which 13 security personnel were killed.

"Though Ramakrishna, a top Maoist leader who is now dead, masterminded the attack of February 15, 2008, Chalapathi was the person who executed it on the ground. He was also the person who ensured that the Maoists could successfully escape from Nayagarh town after robbing the police armoury," a senior officer involved in anti-Naxal operations said on Wednesday.

Chalapathi married Aruna alias Chaitanya Venkat Ravi, a deputy commander of the banned outfit PHOTO: X

Hailing from Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district, where Maoist activities have ended now, Chalapathi was mainly active in Chhattisgarh and Odisha, officials said.

During his life in the forests, Chalapathi got close to Aruna alias Chaitanya Venkat Ravi, a deputy commander of the outfit's Andhra–Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee. Subsequently, they got married.

The selfie with Aruna that led to his identification was found in an abandoned smartphone that was recovered in May 2016, following a gunfight between Maoists and security forces in Andhra Pradesh, officials said.

Over the last few years, he had been staying in Darabha in Chhattishgarh's Bastar district as he couldn't travel much due to problems with his knees. He was in his mid-60s, they said.

He was considered an expert in military tactics and guerrilla warfare, officials said.—PTI

ISRO launches module for Gaganyaan mission

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre of ISRO has dispatched the Crew Module for the first uncrewed mission of Gaganyaan (G1) after successfully completing the integration of the liquid propulsion system, the space agency said on Wednesday.

Gaganyaan will be ISRO's first attempt towards acquiring human spaceflight capabilities. Before sending the crew, the ISRO is planning to send uncrewed mission to the space under its Gaganyaan project.

"On 21 January 2025, the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) of ISRO dispatched the Crew Module for the first uncrewed mission of Gaganyaan (G1), after successfully completing the integration of the liquid propulsion system," ISRO said in a statement.

LPSC, Bengaluru has dispatched the module to Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, officials said.

According to the space agency, the Crew Module Propulsion System (CMPS) is a bi-propellant based Reaction Control System (RCS) and is meant for precise three axis control namely Pitch, Yaw and Roll, of crew module.

The control will be initiated after service module separation during the descent and re-entry phase until deployment of parachute-based deceleration system.

"This system employs 12 100N thrusters, pressurisation system with high pressure gas bottles and the propellant feed system along with the associated fluid control components," ISRO said. —PTI

A RARE SNOW STORM IN US

A rare winter storm has brought snow and freezing rain to parts of the US deep south, closing highways and airports in Texas and prompting a first-ever blizzard warning in southwest Louisiana. Four people are thought to have died from cold. Up in the country's north, New York state is being hit by storm, blanketed by up to 18 inches of snow. Over 2,200 flights were cancelled and 3,000 were delayed. The Gulf Coast, where flurries are a rare sight, saw historic snowfall
PHOTO: PTI

Indians hit as Trump ends birthright citizenship

President Donald Trump moved to end a decades-old immigration policy known as birthright citizenship when he ordered the cancellation of the constitutional guarantee that US-born children are citizens regardless of their parents' status.

According to the latest Census, there are over 5.4 million Indians in the United States, making up approximately 1.47 per cent of the US population. Two-thirds are immigrants, while 34 per cent are US-born.

If Trump's move is implemented, children born to Indian citizens who are living in the country on temporary work visas or tourist visas would no longer automatically receive citizenship.

Trump's roughly 700-word executive order, issued late Monday, amounts to a fulfilment of something he's talked about during the presidential campaign.

But whether it succeeds is far from certain as attorneys general in 18 states and two cities challenged the order in court on Tuesday, seeking to block the president.

Here's a closer look at birthright citizenship, Trump's executive order and reaction to it:

Donald Trump's order amounts to a fulfilment of something he's talked about during the presidential campaign ***PHOTO: PTI***

What is birthright citizenship?

Birthright citizenship means anyone born in the US is a citizen, regardless of their parents' immigration status. People, for instance, in the United States on a tourist or other visa or in the country illegally can become the parents of a citizen if their child is born here.

It's been in place for decades and enshrined in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, supporters say. But Trump and allies dispute the reading of the amendment and say there need to be tougher standards on becoming a citizen.

What does Trump's order say?

The order questions that the 14th Amendment extends citizenship automatically to anyone born in the United States.

The 14th Amendment was born in the aftermath of the Civil War and ratified in 1868. It says: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

Trump's order excludes the following people from automatic citizenship: those whose mothers were not legally in the United States and whose fathers were not US citizens or lawful permanent residents; people whose mothers were in the country legally but on a temporary basis and whose fathers were not citizens or legal permanent residents.

It goes on to bar federal agencies from recognising the citizenship of people in those categories. It takes effect 30 days from Tuesday, on February 19.

What is the history of the issue?

The 14th Amendment did not always guarantee birthright citizenship to all US-born people. Congress did not authorise citizenship for all Native Americans born in the United States, for instance, until 1924.

In 1898 an important birthright citizenship case unfolded in the US Supreme Court. The court held that Wong Kim Ark, who was born in San Francisco to Chinese immigrants, was a US citizen because he was born in the country. After a trip abroad, he had faced denied reentry by the federal government on the grounds that he wasn't a citizen under the Chinese Exclusion Act. But some advocates of immigration restrictions have argued that while the case clearly applied to children born to parents who are both legal immigrants, it's less clear whether it applies to children born to parents without legal status.

What has the reaction to Trump's order been?

Eighteen states, plus the District of Columbia and San Francisco sued in federal court to block Trump's order.

New Jersey Democratic Attorney General Matt Platkin said Tuesday the president cannot undo a right written into the Constitution with a stroke of his pen.

"Presidents have broad power but they are not kings," Platkin said.

Not long after Trump signed the order, immigrant rights groups filed suit to stop it.

Chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts along with other immigrant rights advocates filed a suit in New Hampshire federal court.

The suit asks the court to find the order to be unconstitutional. It highlights the case of a woman identified as "Carmen," who is pregnant but is not a citizen. The lawsuit says she has lived in the United States for more than 15 years and has a pending visa application that could lead to permanent status. She has no other immigration status, and the father of her expected child has no immigration status either, the suit says. "Stripping children of the priceless treasure' of citizenship is a grave injury," the suit said. "It denies them the full membership in US society to which they are entitled."

In addition to New Jersey and the two cities, California, Massachusetts, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin joined the lawsuit to stop the order. *—PTI*

SALAR

1 in 12 minors sexually abused online: Lancet

About one in every 12 children around the world were subjected to online sexual abuse in the past year, according to a study published in The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health journal.

Researchers from the University of Edinburgh, UK, and China Agricultural University reviewed 123 studies conducted between 2010 and 2023, and found that one in eight children globally are affected by image-based sexual abuse on the internet.

Roughly the same number were found to be subjected to 'online solicitation' -- being persuaded into sexual activity or exposure.

"One in 12 children globally have been subjected to at least one form of online sexual exploitation or abuse in the past year," the authors wrote.

However, in regions, including South Asia, where current evidence is either limited or non-existent, the team called for more research.

"East Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, and South Asia are lacking prevalence data; these regions constitute a large percentage of the global population of children so there is an urgent need for research at a national level in these regions," they wrote.

The findings pointed "to the need for increased legislation and primary prevention efforts to keep children safe".

Aimed to understand the prevalence and nature of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, the study identified four subtypes -- online sexual exploitation (4.7 per cent global prevalence), and sexual extortion (3.5 per cent), exposure to sexual images and solicitation.

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The findings pointed to the need for increased legislation and primary prevention efforts to keep children safe ***PHOTO: PTI***

Further, the researchers found "no significant difference between the experiences of girls and boys with respect to online sexual victimisation from representative surveys", in contrast to previous evidence suggesting girls being more vulnerable than boys.

The authors proposed that changes in online environments may have increased victimisation rates for boys.

They added that previous definitions of sexual exploitation involving 'contact' do not hold true for online environments. *—PTI*

Researchers added that previous definitions of sexual exploitation involving 'contact' do not hold true for online environments ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Palestinians confront landscape of destruction in Gaza's 'ghost towns'

Palestinians in Gaza are confronting an apocalyptic landscape of devastation after a ceasefire paused more than 15 months of fighting between Israel and Hamas.

Across the tiny coastal enclave, where built-up refugee camps are interspersed between cities, drone footage captured by The Associated Press shows mounds of rubble stretching as far as the eye can see — remnants of the longest and deadliest war between Israel and Hamas in their blood-ridden history.

"As you can see, it became a ghost town," said Hussein Barakat, 38, whose home in the southern city of Rafah was flattened. "There is nothing," he said, as he sat drinking coffee on a brown armchair perched on the rubble of his three-storey home, in a surreal scene.

Critics say Israel has waged a campaign of scorched earth to destroy the fabric of life in Gaza, accusations that are being considered in two global courts, including the crime of genocide. Israel denies those charges and says its military has been fighting a complex battle in dense urban areas and that it tries to avoid causing undue harm to civilians and their infrastructure.

Military experts say the reality is complicated.

"For a campaign of this duration, which is a year's worth of fighting in a heavily urban environment where you have an adversary that is hiding in amongst that environment, then you would expect an extremely high level of damage," said Matthew Savill, director of military sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, a British think-tank.

Savill said that it was difficult to draw a broad conclusion about the nature of Israel's campaign. To do so, he said, would require each strike and operation to be assessed to determine whether they adhered to the laws of armed conflict and whether all were proportional, but he did not think the scorched earth description was accurate.

International rights groups. including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, view the vast destruction as part of a broader pattern of extermination and genocide directed at Palestinians in Gaza, a charge Israel denies. The groups dispute Israel's stance that the destruction was a result of military activity.

Human Rights Watch, in a November report accusing Israel of crimes against humanity, said "the destruction is so substantial that it indicates the intention to permanently displace many people."

From a fierce air campaign during the first weeks of the war, to a ground invasion that sent thousands of troops in on tanks, the Israeli assault, has ground down much of the civilian infrastructure of the Gaza Strip, displacing 90 per cent of its population.

Airstrikes throughout the war toppled buildings and other structures ***PHOTO: PTI***

The brilliant colour of pre-war life has faded into a monotone cement gray that dominates the territory. It could take decades, if not more, to rebuild.

Airstrikes throughout the war toppled buildings and other structures. But the destruction intensified with the ground forces, who fought Hamas fighters in close combat in dense areas.

If militants were seen firing from an apartment building near a troop maneuver, forces might take the entire building down to thwart the threat. Tank tracks chewed up paved roads, leaving dusty stretches of earth in their wake.

The military's engineering corps was tasked with using bulldozers to clear routes, downing buildings seen as threats, and blowing up Hamas' underground tunnel network.

Experts say the operations to neutralise tunnels were extremely destructive to surface infrastructure. For example, if a 1.5-kilometre tunnel was blown up by Israeli forces, it would not spare homes or buildings above, said Michael Milshtein, a former Israeli army intelligence officer.

"If (the tunnel) passes under an urban area, it all gets destroyed," he said. "There's no other way to destroy a tunnel."

Cemeteries, schools, hospitals and more were targeted and destroyed, he said, because Hamas was using these for military purposes. Secondary blasts from Hamas explosives inside these buildings could worsen the damage.

The way Israel has repeatedly returned to areas it said were under its control, only to have militants overrun it again, has exacerbated the destruction, Savill said.

That's evident especially in northern Gaza, where Israel launched a new campaign in early October that almost obliterated Jabaliya, a built up, urban refugee camp. Jabaliya is home to the descendants of Palestinians who fled, or were forced to flee, during the war that led to Israels creation in 1948. Milshtein said Israel's dismantling of the tunnel network is also to blame for the destruction there.

But the destruction was not only caused from strikes on targets. Israel also carved out a buffer zone about a kilometre inside Gaza from its border with Israel, as well as within the Netzarim corridor that bisects north Gaza from the south, and along the Philadelphi Corridor, a stretch of land along Gaza's border with Egypt. Vast swaths in these areas were levelled.

Amir Avivi, a retired Israeli general, said the buffer zones were an operational necessity meant to carve out secure plots of land for Israeli forces. He denied Israel had cleared civilian areas indiscriminately.

The destruction, like the civilian death toll in Gaza, has raised accusations that Israel committed war crimes, which it denies. The decisions the military made in choosing what to topple, and why, are an important factor in that debate.

"The second militants move into a building and start using it to fire on you, you start making a calculation about whether or not you can strike," Savill said. Downing the building, he said, "still needs to be necessary." *—PTI*

TRUMP TO IMPOSE 10% TARIFF ON CHINA

Announces $500B AI initiative; fires heads of TSA & Coast Guard; scraps aviation safety advisory panel

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

In a flurry of early-morning announcements, President Donald Trump is implementing significant policy changes, including potential tariffs, a massive investment in artificial intelligence, and alterations to immigration enforcement.

In a bid to combat the flow of fentanyl into the United States, Trump announced he is contemplating a 10 per cent tariff on Chinese imports, effective 1 February. This follows claims that China is a key supplier of fentanyl to Mexico and Canada, contributing to a public health crisis in the US. "We're talking about a tariff of 10% on China based on the fact that they're sending fentanyl to Mexico and Canada," Trump stated during a White House press conference, flanked by tech leaders from Oracle, SoftBank, and OpenAI.

These tariffs would be in addition to those previously imposed by Trump on over $300 billion worth of Chinese goods and would further the administration's stance against the opioid epidemic. Despite the calls to action, Trump revealed he had not directly discussed tariffs during his recent conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In a separate announcement, Trump unveiled a staggering $500 billion investment initiative focused on artificial intelligence, termed "Stargate." This venture, which involves partnerships with Oracle, SoftBank, and OpenAI, aims to develop AI infrastructure through a network of data centres across the United States, with initial projects underway in Texas. "This will create over 100,000 American jobs almost immediately," Trump remarked, emphasising the importance of keeping technological advancements within the country to remain competitive against other nations, particularly China.

The administration also made headlines by eliminating policies that restricted immigration enforcement actions in sensitive locations like schools and churches. This reversal allows officers from both Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to arrest undocumented immigrants in these areas, a change that critics argue could instil fear in communities, especially among vulnerable populations.

Trump appears on a screen as traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange **PHOTO: PTI**

In shifts to Homeland Security leadership, Trump fired key figures at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Coast Guard, along with disbanding the membership of the Aviation Security Advisory Committee. This move has raised concerns over the implications for aviation safety, especially following recent instances of security breaches. Critics have branded the firings as politically motivated, with bipartisan condemnation of the Coast Guard Commandant's dismissal.

The changes made during this early phase of Trump's presidency signal a definitive shift in policy priorities and communication strategies, especially concerning immigrant rights and community relations.

> **I like competent people coming into our country, even if that involves them training and helping other people who may not have the qualifications they do. But I don't want to stop – and I'm not just talking about engineers, I'm talking about people at all levels**
>
> —Donald Trump on H1B visas

Trump pardons Silk Road website founder

Trump announced Tuesday that he had pardoned Ross Ulbricht, the founder of Silk Road, an underground website for selling drugs.

Ulbricht had been sentenced to life in prison in 2015.

Trump posted on Truth Social, his social media website, that he had spoken to Ulbricht's mother on his first full day in office.

Trump also called Ulbricht's prison sentence "ridiculous". —*PTI*

Trump admin orders leave for Federal DEI staff

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

The Trump administration has ordered all federal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) staff to be placed on paid leave, as per a memo issued by the Office of Personnel Management on Tuesday. This follows an executive order aimed at eliminating federal diversity programmes, which could impact initiatives from anti-bias training to support for minority farmers and homeowners. —*PTI*

22 states oppose BRC abolition

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

Attorneys general from 22 states have launched a lawsuit against President Donald Trump's executive order aiming to end the century-old practice of birthright citizenship (BRC), which grants citizenship to US-born children regardless of their parents' immigration status. Trump's order, set to take effect on February 19, aims to restrict citizenship for children of non-American citizens. —*PTI*

BISHOP PLEADS FOR 'MERCY' ON LGBTQ+

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

Rev Mariann Budde **PHOTO: X**

At the inaugural prayer service, Right Rev Mariann Budde, the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, made a heartfelt appeal to US President Donald Trump, urging him to show compassion towards the LGBTQ+ community and undocumented migrant workers. Citing Trump's belief that he was saved by God from assassination, Budde implored, "In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now."

Trump, who has previously issued executive orders reversing transgender rights and tightening immigration policies, downplayed Budde's sermon upon his return to the White House, remarking, "Not too exciting, was it?" and added, "I didn't think it was a good service."

The Washington National Cathedral service, attended by Trump and Vice President JD Vance, focused on national unity rather than partisan agreement. Budde expressed a desire for community across diversity, stating, "Unity is not partisan."

Despite the presence of evangelicals in the congregation, none were included in the speaking programme. The service featured leaders from various religious traditions and emphasised compassion and togetherness, with readings addressing the care for those in need. This year's service diverged from tradition, as noted dean Very Rev Randy Hollerith. —*PTI*

TRUMP TO PUTIN: IT'S TALKS OR SANCTIONS

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

- About US military support for Ukraine, Trump said he intends to engage in discussions with both Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and Russian President Putin "very soon"

Former US President Donald Trump expressed his willingness to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin at any time, while cautioning that the US may impose sanctions on Russia if it fails to negotiate regarding Ukraine. Trump said the on-going war in Ukraine should never have occurred, attributing its escalation to what he deemed a lack of competence in current leadership.

Trump said, "The war in Ukraine would have never happened if I were the president... He disrespected Biden." He underscored the gravity of the situation, noting that millions have been affected and cities reduced to rubble.

When asked about US military support for Ukraine, Trump said he is assessing the situation and intends to engage in discussions with both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and President Putin "very soon." He also highlighted that the European Union should contribute more towards the financial assistance given Ukraine, emphasising that the US has invested significantly more than Europe.

Trump also remarked on the H-1B foreign guest workers' visa, indicating his belief in the necessity of attracting "very competent" individuals through the programme. —*PTI*

Libyan warlord expelled from Italy after ICC warrant

ROME, 22 JAN

Italian police recently detained Ossama Anjiem, also known as Ossama al-Masri, following a warrant from the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, an Italian tribunal refused to sanction the arrest, leading to al-Masri's release and return to Libya, said reports from state-run RAI television. Al-Masri, who leads the Tripoli branch of the Reform and Rehabilitation Institution—a notorious network of detention centres—was apprehended in Turin after attending a Juventus-Milan football match. The ICC's chief prosecutor has issued warrants related to alleged crimes beyond the Libyan civil war, including abuses in detention facilities. The Italian government's close ties to Libya and its vested energy interests complicated the situation. —*PTI*

Harry settles lawsuit against Murdoch

LONDON, 22 JAN

Rupert Murdoch's UK tabloids made a rare apology to Prince Harry in settling his privacy invasion lawsuit and will pay him a huge sum, his lawyer announced Wednesday.

News Group Newspapers offered a "full and unequivocal apology to the Duke of Sussex for the serious intrusion by The Sun between 1996 and 2011 into his private life, including incidents of unlawful activities carried out by private investigators working for The Sun," attorney David Sherborne said.

It was the first time News Group Newspapers has acknowledged wrongdoing at The Sun, a paper once known for featuring topless women on Page 3.

The statement itself was remarkable in breadth, acknowledging "phone hacking, surveillance and misuse of private information by journalists and private investigators" aimed at Harry, allegations NGN had strongly denied before trial.

The statement even went beyond the scope of the lawsuit to acknowledge intruding on the life of his mother, the late Princess Diana.

The bombshell announcement in London's High Court came as the Duke of Sussex's trial was about to start against the publishers of The Sun and the now-defunct News of the World for unlawfully snooping on him over decades. —*PTI*

Israel seeks control of Rafah border

JERUSALEM, 22 JAN

Palestinians return to Rafah after the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas came into effect **PHOTO: PTI**

Israel said it will maintain control of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip during the first phase of the ceasefire with Hamas.

A statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office on Wednesday denied reports that the Palestinian Authority would control the crossing.

It said local Palestinians not affiliated with Hamas who had been vetted by Israeli security would merely stamp passports at the crossing. It noted that, under international agreements, this stamp "is the only way Gazans may leave the Strip in order to enter, or be received in, other countries."

The truce, on its fourth day, is supposed to bring calm to the war-battered Gaza for at least six weeks and see 33 Hamas-held hostages released in return for hundreds of Palestinians jailed by Israel.

European Union monitors would supervise the crossing, which will be surrounded by Israeli troops. Israel also will approve the movement of people and goods.

Israel captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing last May, forcing it to shut down. Egypt, a key mediator in more than a year of negotiations that led to the ceasefire, has demanded that Palestinians control the Gaza side.

Meanwhile, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in Gaza said Tuesday trucks from the UN, aid groups, governments and the private sector are arriving and no major looting has been reported -- just a few minor incidents. —*PTI*

S California braces for rain amid ongoing fire threat

LOS ANGELES, 22 JAN

Southern California is forecasted to face hazardous winds on Wednesday, but rain is expected this weekend, potentially reducing wildfire risks. However, any rain could also produce toxic ash runoff. Mayor Karen Bass has issued an order to accelerate cleanup in burned areas and protect the environment from fire-related pollutants. This includes removing vegetation, reinforcing roads, and installing barriers to prevent mud and debris flows, as rain is anticipated to start Saturday with a 60–80 per cent chance. While most areas may receive only a third of an inch, localised thunderstorms could deliver up to an inch, raising concerns about debris flows on scorched hills. —*PTI*

WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION

Hunt for people after deadly floods in Indonesia

JAKARTA, 22 JAN

Indonesian rescuers have recovered two more bodies in their ongoing search for those missing following severe floods and landslides on the island of Java, raising the death toll to 19. Heavy rains on Monday led to flooded rivers overwhelming nine villages in Pekalongan regency, Central Java, causing landslides that buried homes and a café in the Petungkriyono resort area.

The National Search and Rescue Agency released harrowing imagery of rescue workers digging through thick mud and debris, as roads and rice fields transformed into brown quagmires. Abdul Muhari, spokesperson for the National Disaster Management Agency, reported that the calamities had destroyed 25 houses, a dam, and three key bridges connecting local villages. At least 13 individuals sustained injuries, and nearly 300 people were displaced to temporary shelters.

Rescuers use boats to save a woman who just gave birth **PHOTO: X**

Rescue operations were halted due to adverse weather, including heavy rain and fog that made searching hazardous. On Wednesday, teams combed affected rivers and rubble in Kasimpar village, where search efforts continue for seven missing individuals.

Additionally, landslides have impacted other regions, including Bali, where four fatalities occurred after five houses were buried. Experts warn that increasing rainfall from climate change may lead to more frequent landslides in this archipelago, which is home to millions living in mountainous and flood-prone areas. —*PTI*

- The calamities destroyed 25 houses, a dam and three bridges connecting local villages. At least 13 individuals sustained injuries and nearly 300 people were displaced

NINE DETAINED IN FIRE INCIDENT AT SKI RESORT HOTEL IN TURKEY

ISTANBUL, 22 JAN

Nine individuals, including the owner of the Grand Kartal Hotel, have been detained in connection with a devastating fire that claimed the lives of 76 people at a ski resort hotel, Al Jazeera reported on Wednesday. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya confirmed the arrests as scrutiny mounts over the hotel's safety measures. Six prosecutors have been assigned to examine the tragedy, which reportedly began in the restaurant area of the 12-storey hotel located at the Kartalkaya ski resort in the Bolu Mountains. Witnesses have raised alarms regarding the hotel's fire detection system, which allegedly failed to activate during the blaze. Survivors among the 238 registered guests recounted harrowing experiences of escaping through smoke-filled corridors in darkness, with some even jumping from windows to flee the flames. Minister Yerlikaya stated that 45 victims' bodies have been returned to their families, with DNA testing ongoing to identify the remaining deceased.

"Our hearts are broken. We are in mourning," he expressed, assuring that those responsible would face justice. —*ANI*

Rupee rises 25P to close at 86.33 against USD

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

The rupee appreciated 25 paise to close at 86.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, supported by positive domestic equities and soft US dollar index. Forex traders said the rupee is likely to witness high volatility with a negative bias ahead of key events in the global and domestic economic landscape. Moreover, the overall uncertainty about the global economy continued to weigh on both currencies and commodities, keeping investors on edge. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.56 against the greenback. During the day, the local unit touched an intraday high of 86.30 and a low of 86.71. It finally closed at 86.33 (provisional) against the US dollar, up 25 paise from its previous close.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold jumps ₹630 to hit record high of ₹82,730

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Gold prices rallied by Rs 630 to a lifetime high of Rs 82,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday following persistent buying by jewellers and retailers amid strong global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Rallying for the sixth straight session, gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 630 to hit a lifetime high of Rs 82,330 per 10 grams. "Gold prices touched new all-time highs in Wednesday's session. The uncertainty surrounding US President Donald Trump's trade policy appears to be an important factor driving a haven flow toward precious metals," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. —*PTI*

Lack of tariff rules dominate PAC meeting

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Concerns over "skyrocketing" airfare and "little action" by government agencies and regulator dominated the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meeting on Wednesday as several MPs sought accountability from private airport operators and airlines to provide relief to passengers. PAC Chairperson K C Venugopal described the meeting of the panel, which has witnessed fiery and at times acrimonious discussion along party lines in the past, as "one of the best" sittings. Members, he said, expressed concerns that the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) "is not acting properly as a regulator". "We need clear cut answers," he told PTI after the meeting. —*PTI*

HCL to create 5,000 jobs in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 22 JAN

Technology company HCLTech announced the launch of a new tech centre in Hyderabad which is expected to provide 5,000 additional jobs, officials said. The announcement came after a meeting between Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu and C Vijayakumar, the global CEO and Managing Director of HCLTech, on the inaugural day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos. The new 3,20,000 sqft centre will be providing cutting-edge cloud, AI and digital transformation solutions to global clients across industries such as hi-tech, life sciences and financial services, an official press release said. "Hyderabad, with its world-class infrastructure and high-quality talent pool, has been a key location on HCLTech's global network. " Vijaykumar said.—*PTI*

$100B investment, 1M jobs from trade deal with Europe

Skill Development Minister said Indian talent has global market

DAVOS, 22 JAN

A new Trade and Economic Participation Agreement with a four-nation European bloc will bring USD 100 billion worth of investment and create one million jobs in India, Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary said on Wednesday.

Here to attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, the minister told PTI in an interview that Indian talent has proved its mettle globally and the commitments made by global companies show their trust in the skillset of Indian youth.

Meanwhile, leaders from across the world have called for a renewed global cooperation with constructive optimism as they continued their deliberations here at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

They highlighted the need for new pathways to greater cooperation in an era of heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Cooperation and dialogue in a time of uncertainty emerged as key themes, with calls for new global partnerships and geostrategic adaptation common among European leaders in particular.

Leaders from across the world called for a renewed global cooperation with constructive optimism at WEF in Davos PHOTO: PTI

Economic transformation through innovation, sustainability and inclusive development also took centre stage, as leaders highlighted pathways to prosperity and resilience across regions.

Addressing a gathering of global leaders, WEF Founder and Chairman Klaus Schwab said, "This transition from the Industrial to the Intelligent Age is occurring at an exponential pace, carrying unprecedented risks for humanity as we strive to prepare and adapt for its complexities." Schwab called on the global community to rise to the moment with "constructive optimism", urging stakeholders from all sectors -- government, business, civil society and academia -- to unite in crafting solutions to shared challenges.

Speaking at what he described as "one of the most uncertain geopolitical and geoeconomic moments in generations," WEF President and CEO Borge Brende stressed that the world is at a critical inflection point and that 2025 will be a year of enormous consequence. She further said that open markets, fair and transparent rules and fiscal discipline are the cornerstones of sustained prosperity. Also reflecting on the changing world order, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen outlined Europe's plan to adapt to a new era of "harsh geostrategic competition" by increasing its competitiveness, strengthening global partnerships and maintaining its commitment to sustainable development.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for renewed commitments to security and prosperity in the face of global challenges, emphasizing that partnerships serve as the "engine for successful economic development." Amid rising geopolitical tensions, China's Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang warned against the growing fragmentation of the global economic system and rising protectionism, emphasizing that "trade war has no winners". —*PTI*

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu speaks at CII session on the sidelines of WEF in Davos, Switzerland PHOTO: PTI

Andhra CM to meet Bill Gates in Davos

AMARAVATI, 22 JAN

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled to meet Microsoft founder Bill Gates and several other global executives in Davos, Switzerland on Wednesday, officials said.

On the third day of his visit to the Swiss resort town, the Chief Minister will also meet the officials from the World Economic Forum (WEF), they added.

"The chiefs of Unilever, DP World Group, Petronas, Google Cloud, Pepsi and AstraZeneca are going to meet the CM. The CM will also hold discussions with Bill Gates and WEF representatives," a press release said.

Moreover, Andhra Pradesh is expected to ink an agreement with renewable energy player Greenko and the CM is scheduled to attend roundtable conferences on topics such as organic farming, human mission calibration and green hydrogen, and renewable power, the release added.

The CM will promote 'Brand Andhra' and showcase investment opportunities in the state, it said. Earlier, addressing a roundtable discussion on 'Building the Next Petrochemical Hub', Naidu underscored the immense potential Andhra Pradesh holds as a petrochemical hub.

"Our state is home to India's largest Petroleum, Chemicals, and Petrochemicals Investment Region (PCPIR), spanning an impressive 640sqkm," he said in a post on X. —*PTI*

Sensex jumps 567 pts, Nifty ends above 23,150

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

Benchmark Sensex rebounded nearly 567 points and Nifty regained 23,150 level on Wednesday following value buying in IT and banking shares and firm global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 566.63 points or 0.75 per cent to close at 76,404.99, driven by gains in Infosys, TCS and HDFC Bank. During the day, the benchmark surged 624.77 points or 0.82 per cent to hit an intraday high of 76,463.13.

The broader NSE Nifty climbed 130.70 points or 0.57 per cent to settle at 23,155.35. In the intraday session, the Nifty rose 144.9 points or 0.63 per cent to 23,169.55 on the NSE.

The key stock indices had slumped to seven-month lows on Tuesday due to foreign fund outflows and profit-taking by investors amid tariff war worries. Sensex tanked by 1,235 points and Nifty by 320 points.

PHOTO: PTI

Recovering its past losses, Infosys surged 3.16 per cent to emerge as the biggest gainer among Sensex scrips. Tata Consultancy Services jumped 2.97 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 2.28 per cent. Sun Pharmaceutical, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the gainers.

Tata Motors was the biggest loser among Sensex shares, dropping by 2.24 per cent. PowerGrid, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, NTPC, Tata Steel and Adani Ports were the major laggards.

"The benchmark indices rebounded amidst heightened volatility following better-than-expected results from a major private bank. The IT sector led gains, recovering from recent losses, while mid and small-cap stocks continued to underperform due to valuation concerns," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Broader markets, however, closed lower. The BSE small-cap index slumped 1.56 per cent and midcap gauge declined 1.2 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, Focused IT rose the most by 2.19 per cent, followed by Information Technology by 1.88 per cent, Teck by 1.65 per cent, Bankex by 0.26 per cent and Financial Services by 0.17 per cent. —*PTI*

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

India's hiring activity up 31% in December: Report

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

India's hiring activity rose 31 per cent in December, driven by consumer electronics, manufacturing, and construction and engineering sectors, a report said on Wednesday.

According to foundit insights tracker (fit), the country's hiring activity rose 12 per cent over the past six months, with a 31 per cent year-on-year increase in recruitment in December.

The fit is a comprehensive monthly report analysing online job posting activity conducted by foundit.in.

The report further said the growth in hiring is reflected across sectors, led by consumer electronics, manufacturing, and construction and engineering leading the charge with 60 per cent, 57 per cent, and 57 per cent YoY, respectively.

PHOTO:PIXABAY

Meanwhile, AI jobs in India surged 42 per cent over the past two years reaching 2,53,000 positions.

Top skills include Python, AI/ML, data science, deep learning, SQL and software development.

"The growth in hiring "With a projected 14 per cent further growth in AI hiring in 2025, we are witnessing a paradigm shift where AI is no longer a futuristic concept, but a fundamental element of India's present and future workforce," foundit CEO V Suresh said. —*PTI*

Appliances to contribute 50% of revenue in next 3 years

SAN JOSE, 22 JAN

Consumer electronics major Samsung expects its appliances and display business to scale up substantially in India, contributing to half of the topline in the next three years, JB Park, President & CEO of Southwest Asia has said.

The current penetration of consumer electronic products in India is still low, a major market for the South Korean Chaebol, however, it is expected to scale up, helped by factors such as the rise of the Indian economy and middle class.

Samsung is aggressively expanding its play into the consumer electronics segment by democratising the latest features such as AI in the appliances and display segment (QLED and OLED TVs), which is helping it to gain significant market share in the premium segment."The consumer electronic penetration in the Indian market is still very low. I think consumer electronics will have much bigger growth, which will increase our revenue portion of the category against mobile phones," said Park.

However, penetration of India's smartphone segment has matured and is slightly behind the developed countries, where people carry more than one device for their needs. —*PTI*

Taxpayers seek tax cut in FY26 Budget: Thornton Bharat survey

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

57 per cent of individual taxpayers want taxes to be lowered in the upcoming Budget, Grant Thornton Bharat's pre-budget survey said. The survey, which had at least 500 respondents, said although 72 per cent of individual taxpayers have opted for a new income tax regime, a majority (63 per cent) of taxpayers still seek an increase in incentives under the old tax regime.

Around 47 per cent desire a hike in the set-off limit or removal of the Rs 2 lakh limit altogether under the old regime. These changes would provide greater flexibility in offsetting losses, boost investment in real estate, and enable taxpayers to fulfil their aspirations to secure a reasonable residential accommodation. 53 per cent of the respondents are advocating for the government to allow the set-off of house property losses under the new tax regime, the survey said. Additionally, 57 per cent want lower income tax rates, while 25 per cent advocate for higher exemption upcoming budget. Grant Thornton Bharat partner Akhil Chandna said an increase in NPS tax deduction limits and more flexible NPS withdrawal rules would certainly promote retirement savings. "To promote a greener environment through the use of electric vehicles (EV), clarity is expected from the government on perquisite taxation rules for EV usage, and the deduction for the purchase of EVs should be reinstated under the law," Chandna said. —*PTI*

EPFO adds 14.63 lakh net members in November

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Retirement fund body EPFO has added 14.63 lakh net members in November 2024, a growth of 4.88 per cent over the same month last year, according to the latest payroll data.

The growth in net member additions signifies increased employment opportunities and heightened awareness of employee benefits, bolstered by EPFO's effective outreach initiatives, a labour ministry statement said.

On a monthly basis, net member additions rose by 9.07 per cent over October 2024, the ministry said. —*PTI*

BUDGET 2025

Railway industry pins hope for mega wagon orders

KOLKATA, 22 JAN

With the Union Budget 2025-26 approaching, industry players are pinning hopes on significant announcements for the railway sector, particularly in freight operations and infrastructure development.

The industry also stressed the need to increase the average speed of freight trains to 50 kmph and deploy advanced 12,000 HP electric locomotives.

Texmaxo Managing Director Sudipta Mukherjee expressed optimism for a substantial wagon order, building on the government's 2022 announcement of approximately 1.2 lakh wagon orders over three years.

"Out of the total 3 lakh long-term wagon procurement plan to increase the total number to six lakh wagons, the government had placed nearly 1.2 lakh wagon orders in 2022, which are supposed to be fulfilled by 2025. We hope the government will repeat a similar mega order for wagons in the upcoming budget to push the railways' share in logistics to 45 per cent from the current 26-27 per cent," Mukherjee said.

He also emphasised the need for increased funding for safety, technology, and predictable train running infrastructure.

Vivek Lohia, Managing Director of Jupiter Wagons Limited, called for a multi-pronged approach to strengthen freight operations.

He highlighted the importance of accelerating the expansion of Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs), including the proposed 'Central India to Coast via DFC', to enhance the competitiveness of Indian industries.

In the previous budget presented in July 2024, Railways received a record capital expenditure allocation of Rs 2.62 lakh crore PHOTO: PIXABAY

- With the government's focus on sustainability and its net-zero mission, the logistics sector anticipates increased attention on railways and waterways in the upcoming budget. Expectations are rife for a 10-20 per cent boost in the railway budget from the previous allocation

Stressing the need to increase the average speed of freight trains to 50 kmph, deploy advanced 12,000 HP electric locomotives, and increase freight train length.

He advocated for strategic railway geography assessments for key sectors like mining, NTPC, petrochemicals, cement, steel, FCI, dry ports, fertilizers, and textiles.

With the government's focus on sustainability and its net-zero mission, the logistics sector anticipates increased attention on railways and waterways in the upcoming budget. Expectations are rife for a 10-20 per cent boost in the railway budget from the previous allocation.

In the previous budget presented in July 2024, Railways received a record capital expenditure allocation of Rs 2.62 lakh crore. This increase is expected to fund track expansion, the addition of high-speed Vande Bharat trains, and improvements in rail freight. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India to follow ICC dress code guidelines: Saikia

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Indian cricket team will adhere to the dress code set by the International Cricket Council (ICC) during the upcoming Champions Trophy, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI on Wednesday, rejecting speculation that the Board had objected to hosting Pakistan's name on the official jersey for the side.The Champions Trophy will be held from February 19 and India will play its share of matches in Dubai after citing security concerns as the reason for refusing to travel to Pakistan. "BCCI will follow every uniform-related ICC rule during the Champions Trophy," Saikia told PTI. "Whatever the other teams will do regarding the logo and dress code, we are going to follow in true letter and spirit," he added.—*PTI*

Big wins for England, and Australia in U19WC

JOHOR, 22 JAN

Opener Davina Perrin smashed a fine half-century and Trudy Johnson put up a fine all-round show as England crushed the United States of America (USA) by eight wickets to climb to the top of Pool B in the U19 Women's T20 World Cup, here Wednesday. Bangladesh, New Zealand, and Australia were the other winners on the day. Bangladesh overcame Scotland by 18 runs, New Zealand defeated Samoa by 67 runs, while Australia were menacing in their 83-run win over Nepal. England flexed their muscle by chasing down 120 in 14.2 overs with opener Perrin scoring a 45-ball 74, studded with nine boundaries and three sixes.—*PTI*

Saud Shakeel and Noman Ali gain big in ICC Test rankings

DUBAI, 22 JAN

Pakistan batter Saud Shakeel and Left-arm spinner Noman Ali broke into the top 10 of the ICC Men's Test Rankings after a 127-run victory over the West Indies in the first Test in Multan. Shakeel (753 rating points), who scored 84 in the first innings, climbed three rankings spots to eighth on the batting list, moving above Australia's Steve Smith (746, 9th) and India's Rishabh Pant (739, 10th). Captain Shan Masood has progressed three slots to 42nd after notching a half-century in the second innings. Mohammad Rizwan, who contributed a useful 71 in the first innings, has moved up two slots to 17th position.—*PTI*

Badminton: PV Sindhu, Lakshya to lead Indian team

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and World Championships bronze winner Lakshya Sen will lead a 14-member Indian team for the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship to be held in Qingdao, China from 11-16 February. India clinched a bronze medal in the last edition of the competition in Dubai in 2023. "The national selectors have given importance to the world rankings and current form of the players while selecting the squad that will have HS Prannoy and Malvika Bansod as the second men's and women's singles players respectively," the Badminton Association of India said in a release. The strong Indian team will also have star doubles players Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty. The women's doubles pairing could be either Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly or Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto. Tanisha will also pair up with Dhruv Kapila in mixed doubles.—*PTI*

Shelton reaches first Melbourne semi-final

Swiatek double-bounce controversy reignites video debate

Ben Shelton PHOTO: @BENSHELTON

MELBOURNE, 22 JAN

Shelton eased into a two-seat lead on Rod Laver Arena but dropped his level enough to allow Sonego to force a fourth set.

The two were well-matched in the set, with both playing some entertaining points before Shelton's strong serving helped him pull away in the resulting tie-break.

Shelton, who clocked a tournament joint-fastest 144mph serve during the match, said he was "relieved" to get through.

"Shout-out to Lorenzo because that was some ridiculous tennis," Shelton added after a quarter-final lasting three hours and 50 minutes.

Both players have benefited from a quarter of the draw which has been left wide open following the early exits of top-10 seeds Taylor Fritz, Daniil Medvedev, and Andrey Rublev.

Friday's semi-final will be Shelton's second in singles at a Grand Slam, having lost in the last four of the 2023 US Open to eventual champion Novak Djokovic.

Iga Swiatek PHOTO:X

A clear double bounce in the Australian Open quarter-final between **Iga Swiatek** and Emma Navarro has reignited the debate over how tennis uses video technology.

Navarro lost a point when she trailed 6-1 2-2 A-40 despite the ball bouncing twice in front of a stretching Swiatek, who went on to win 6-1 6-2.

Because Navarro continued playing, instead of immediately stopping the point, the American eighth seed was unable to challenge the call.

The Australian Open has introduced a video review system this year - but it can only be used on a point-ending call or when a player stops play.

Afterward, Navarro said the incident did not "cause a momentum swing" but still believes there should be a change to the system.

"I think we should be able to see it afterward," Navarro said. "It happened so fast. In the back of your head, you're like, 'OK maybe I can still win the point even though it wasn't called'. "It's going to be a downer if I stop the point and it turns out it wasn't a double bounce. "It's tough."

Alex de Minaur beaten by Jannik Sinner

Alex de Minaur is knocked out of the Australian Open by defending champion Jannik Sinner, who wins their quarterfinal 6-3, 6-2, 6-1 inside two hours.

Meanwhile, Madison Keys downed Elina Svitolina in a thriller, in-form Iga swiatek schooled Emma Navarro, and Ben Shelton beat 55th-ranked Italian Lorenzo Sonego.

Jannik Sinner was all class as he advanced to the semifinals of the Australian Open. He gave credit and praise to his opponent though, saying Alex de Minaur is a top player. "He is a very tough competitor and is an amazing player," Sinner said. "We know each other quite well now, we played last year so many times and we try to understand each other's game, trying to prepare ourselves in the best possible way.

RANJI TROPHY

No one has to tell Rohit what to do: Ajinkya Rahane

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

Rohit Sharma doesn't need to be told what to do and he will get a "big one once he gets in", said Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane on Wednesday, backing the embattled Indian skipper ahead of his first Ranji Trophy appearance in nearly a decade.

All eyes will be on Rohit and his India opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal when defending champions Mumbai will take on Jammu and Kashmir here at the BKC Ground from Thursday.

"See, Rohit is Rohit. We all know that. Aapko bhi pata hai Rohit ka character (You also know Rohit's character). I am really happy to have both of them back in the Mumbai dressing room," Rahane told media during Mumbai's training session here on Wednesday. "Rohit has always been relaxed. Even playing at the international level, his character is similar. His attitude is pretty much relaxed. He knows his game well so, no one has to tell him what he needs to do. "Once he gets in, I'm sure he will do well. He has never changed, which is a very good thing," Rahane added. Form has deserted the 37-year-old Rohit in the past few months with Test losses to New Zealand (at home) and Australia (away) weighing heavily on him currently.

Rahane said every player goes through ups and downs but Rohit has been "really confident." "What is important is (that) he is hungry, he is determined to do well. I am sure once he gets in, he will get a big one," the veteran, who has shared the Indian dressing room with Rohit, said. "He batted well yesterday (in) a couple of sessions so it's part and parcel of a player's career. I am confident about Rohit." Rahane, however, said the contest starting on Thursday could be the only match Rohit would play this season. Rohit will captain India against England in a three-match ODI series starting on February 6 followed by the Champions Trophy.

"I think he's only playing this game; not sure about the next game. His inputs in the next four days will be really important," Rahane said.Jaiswal has shown hunger Rahane said Jaiswal has shown determination at the highest level which has been the reason for his success in international cricket. —*PTI*

India spin a web to bowl out England for 132 in first T20I

KOLKATA, 22 JAN

Mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy was completely at home, starring with figures of 3/23 as India delivered an exceptional bowling display, skittling out England for 132 in the first T20I at Eden Gardens on Wednesday.The biggest surprise of the evening came at the toss when the Gautam Gambhir-led think tank opted to leave out a seemingly fit-again Mohammed Shami, opting for a spin-heavy attack. But the coach was vindicated because perfect execution of plans by his spin troika who snared 5 for 67 in 12 overs bowled between them.Despite the dewy conditions, India went in with three spinners: Ravi Bishnoi (0/23 in 4 overs), Axar Patel (2/22 in 4 overs), and Chakravarthy backing record-breaker Arshdeep Singh's fiery opening spell.The left-arm quick set the tone by dismissing both openers, Phil Salt (0) and Ben Duckett (4), in successive overs en route to his 2/17 from four overs.

—PTI

KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

428 athletes from 19 teams to take part in 5-day meet

LEH/JAMMU, 30 OCT

The Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) 2025 which starts on Thursday will feature 428 athletes from 19 competing teams.Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya is set to declare the Games open in Leh on Thursday.Nineteen teams, comprising states, Union Territories, and institutional outfits, will compete over five days across two events – ice hockey and ice skating – marking the first part of KIWG 2025.A traditional Ladakhi-style opening ceremony has been planned to welcome 594 participants, including 428 athletes.The second part, featuring snow games like skiing, will be hosted by Jammu and Kashmir from February 22 to 25."Sports Minister will attend the opening ceremony at the iconic Nawang Dorjay Stobdan Sports Complex in Leh on Thursday and will declare the games open," an official spokesperson said. Mandaviya will be joined by a host of dignitaries, including the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Brigadier Dr BD Mishra, and senior officials from the Sports Authority of India and the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. —*PTI*

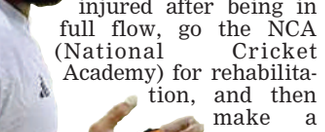


PHOTO:PTI

Greg Norman PHOTO: X

Norman says he would win a debate with Woods

NEW YORK, 22 JAN

Greg Norman says he would win a debate with Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy on how Saudi-funded LIV Golf has helped them financially.

And by the sound of his interview with Australian Golf Digest, it wasn't just LIV Golf where the Shark left his teeth marks.

"When I look back on my past 3 1/2 years, from my past 20 years, oh my gosh, I have changed the game of golf more than what people realize," Norman told the magazine.

He says his tenure with LIV officially ends on Aug. 31. Scott O'Neil, a longtime sports and entertainment executive, has been hired as the new CEO. Woods and McIlroy were both critical of Norman's combative tone when LIV Golf launched in 2022, backed by the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia that offered enormous bonus money for players to defect to the rival league. Both players said there could be no unification with Norman still involved.

McIlroy said at the end of LIV's first year, "No one is going to talk unless there's an adult in the room that can try to mend fences."

Norman said he hasn't watched the indoor TGL backed by McIlroy and Woods because "there's a couple of players who've been very vocal against me."

But then he said he would love to meet with both players to illustrate how they have been helped. —*PTI*

Praggu crushes Mendonca to jump into sole lead

WIJK AAN ZEE, 22 JAN

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defences of fellow Indian Leon Luke Mendonca to jump into sole lead after the fourth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here.

Praggnanandhaa started with an innocuous Ruy Lopez close but found his chances in the middle game when Mendonca, clearly being the rookie here, could not handle the pressure of another high-profile game.

It was another day when Praggnanandhaa found the fire to score his third win on the trot after 46 moves.

Interestingly, Pragg nanandhaa's victories have come at the expense of the Indians in the tournament, with the GM now looking forward to the clash against world champion D Gukesh.

With his third win, the Chennai-based player has stamped his authority ahead of the first rest day of the long and grueling tournament that lasts 13 rounds with three rest days thrown in.

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa PHOTO: PTI

Recently crowned world champion D Gukesh played true to his instinct but could not get past Alexey Sarana, who now plays for Serbia instead of Russia. The Indian, playing with black pieces, tried every trick under the sun but Sarana stuck to the basics to not force anything which could be fatal. —*PTI*

There was a sense of fear during rehab: Shami

KOLKATA, 22 JAN

Seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami has revealed that he was gripped by a sense of fear when he began his rehabilitation after a long injury layoff but managed to overcome that phase by training his mind to stay focussed on the national comeback.

Shami was sidelined after the lost ODI World Cup final against Australia in November 2023 due to an ankle injury that required surgery. The recovery from that was followed by a swelling on his left knee during the domestic comeback some weeks back.

Following his inclusion in India's Champions Trophy squad, his return has garnered national attention. He is also in the squad for the five-match T20I series against England beginning here later this evening.

"I waited for an entire year and I worked very hard (to get back to full fitness). There was a sense of fear (of getting injured during rehabilitation) even while running," Shami said in a video posted by BCCI. "It is difficult for any player to get injured after being in full flow, go the NCA (National Cricket Academy) for rehabilitation, and then make a comeback," he added.

The cricketer, however, said an athlete is far more determined after dealing with an injury.

"When you go through injuries, I feel you grow stronger as an athlete, this is what I feel. Because you have to repeat a lot of things while being mentally strong."

Shami went through the domestic grind, representing his home state Bengal in the Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq and Vijay Hazare but a swelling in his knee finally ruled him out of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Test series in Australia.

On his competitive return in the Ranji Trophy, he guided Bengal to their first win of the season with a seven-wicket haul. He followed it up with impressive performances in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (11 wickets) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (five wickets).

Shami's T20I career has been sporadic, with just 23 appearances since his debut in 2014. His last outing in the format was against England in the 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal. —*PTI*

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Liverpool beats Lille to maintain perfect record

LONDON, 22 JAN

Liverpool booked the spot in the last 16 of the Champions League with a 2-1 victory over 10-man Lille on Tuesday at Anfield, thanks to goals from talisman Mohamed Salah and substitute Harvey Elliott.

Arne Slot's men maintained their 100% record and are top of the 36-team table with 21 points, three points clear of second-placed Barcelona with one game of the league phase remaining. Lille is 11th with 13 points.

Salah netted his 50th European goal for Liverpool in the 34th minute when he sprinted onto a long pass from Curtis Jones after Kostas Tsimikas won the ball in the Reds' half, then curled a shot around goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier. "Special is, I think, the word that describes Mo's performance at this club," Slot said. "Or maybe there are even better words to use, but he's been outstanding for this club for so many years, and still he does. Today, great goal." Despite being reduced to 10 men when Aissa Mandi was shown his second yellow card in the 59th minute for his tackle on Luis Diaz, Jonathan David leveled for the visitors three minutes later when he hammered home the loose ball after Hakon Arnar Haraldsson's shot was blocked. The strike was David's fifth in the competition's league phase this season and only the second goal Liverpool had conceded, with the first coming in its opening game at AC Milan.

Mo Salah reacts to scoring 50 European goals for Liverpool PHOTO: X

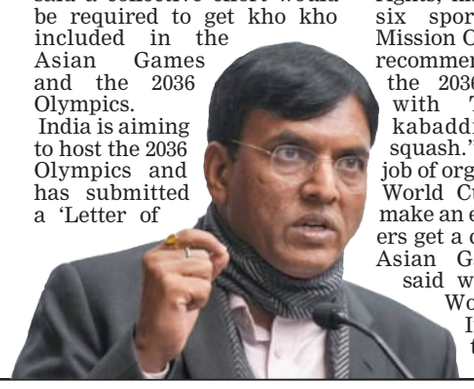
Liverpool quickly regained the lead when a corner was headed out to the edge of the box and Elliott fired a crisp shot that took a wild deflection into the net in the 67th minute.

"Very good team," David said of Liverpool. "I think they might be the best team in the world at the moment. —*PTI*

Mandaviya pitches for kho kho's inclusion in Olympics

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday expressed the government's desire to take traditional Indian sports to the world and said a collective effort would be required to get kho kho included in the Asian Games and the 2036 Olympics.

India is aiming to host the 2036 Olympics and has submitted a 'Letter of Intent', expressing its desire to the International Olympic Committee's Future Host Commission, taking the first concrete step towards its ambitious plan.

If India gets the hosting rights, kho kho is one of the six sports the ministry's Mission Olympic Cell plans to recommend for inclusion in the 2036 Olympics, along with Twenty20 cricket, kabaddi, chess, and squash."We did a splendid job of organizing the Kho Kho World Cup and we need to make an effort that these players get a chance to play at the Asian Games," Mandaviya said while felicitating the World Cup-winning Indian Kho Kho teams." —*PTI*